

Air Force Deployment Reintegration Research: Implications for Leadership

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Abstract

Expanding on previous research on the reintegration experiences of Army Augmentees (Thompson & Gignac, 2001), this study investigated the post-deployment reintegration issues and experiences of a sample of 95 Canadian Air Force personnel posted at seven different Air Force bases across Canada. A total of 14 semi-structured focus groups were held. The purpose of the present report is to detail some of the leadership issues that Air Force personnel identified as important in the context of multidisciplinary teams and teams formed with augmentees. These included leadership issues in team formation (i.e., choice vs. coercion, identifying the leader, and bureaucracy), leadership issues among augmentees (i.e., lack of belonging, lack of organizational support, lack of support from the home unit, lack of group cohesion, and issues related to promotion and recognition), leadership issues in multidisciplinary teams (i.e., proper training, team integration, culture, colour-centrism), leadership issues within units during deployments, leadership issues in reintegration, and effective leadership. Recommendations include the following: determining who actually are Air Force support personnel, as this would have implications for training; improving leadership from home units, as this would have implications for organizational support for Air Force augmentees, reintegration issues, and recognition of Air Force members; and leadership training for leaders of multidisciplinary teams and training for Air Force members, especially Air Force augmentees, who will be working in multidisciplinary teams. Further recommendations from this research include improving overall leadership skills through training of all Air Force members, especially those in positions of leadership, for as the participants interviewed have suggested, holding a position of leadership is not necessarily an indicator of an effective leader.

Résumé

Poursuivant la recherche effectuée antérieurement sur les expériences de réintégration du personnel d'appoint de l'Armée de terre (Thompson et Gignac, 2001), cette étude portait sur les expériences et les problèmes de réintégration post-déploiement d'un échantillon de 95 membres de la Force aérienne du Canada affectés dans sept différentes bases de la Force aérienne au Canada. En tout, 14 groupes types semi-structurés ont été constitués. Le présent rapport a pour but de décrire certains problèmes de leadership que les membres de la Force aérienne ont jugé importants dans le contexte des équipes multidisciplinaires et des équipes constituées de renforts. Il s'agit notamment de problèmes de leadership relatifs à la formation de l'équipe (c.-à-d. choix contre obligation, choix du chef et bureaucratie), de problèmes de leadership parmi les renforts (c.-à-d. absence de sentiment d'appartenance, manque de soutien organisationnel, manque de soutien de la part de l'unité d'appartenance, absence de cohésion au sein du groupe et problèmes liés à la promotion et à la reconnaissance), de problèmes de leadership au sein des équipes multidisciplinaires (c.-à-d. pertinence de la formation, intégration à l'équipe, culture, favoritisme à l'égard de la couleur), les problèmes de leadership au sein des unités pendant les déploiements, les problèmes de leadership au moment de la réintégration et, enfin, le leadership efficace. Parmi les recommandations, citons notamment : déterminer qui sont réellement les membres du personnel de soutien de la Force aérienne, car cela entraîne des répercussions sur l'instruction, améliorer le leadership des unités d'appartenance, car cela entraîne des répercussions sur le soutien organisationnel des renforts de la Force aérienne, des problèmes de réintégration et de reconnaissance des membres de la Force aérienne, ainsi que la formation en leadership à l'intention des chefs des équipes multidisciplinaires et la formation des membres de la Force aérienne, en particulier les renforts de la Force aérienne, qui feront partie des équipes multidisciplinaires. Cette recherche a donné lieu à d'autres recommandations, par exemple, améliorer les qualités de chef générales en dispensant une formation à tous les membres de la Force aérienne, en particulier ceux qui occupent des postes de direction, parce que, comme l'ont indiqué les participants interrogés, le simple fait d'assumer des fonctions de chef ne fait pas de vous un chef efficace.

Executive summary

The primary purpose of the present research project was to build upon previous post-deployment reintegration work done with CF Army personnel (Thompson & Gignac, 2001) and to increase our understanding of reintegration issues in the CF, specifically, in the Air Force.

To this end, we conducted focus group interviews with 95 Air Force personnel from seven Canadian Forces bases (CFB Trenton, CFB Comox, CFB Cold Lake, CFB Winnipeg, CFB Bagotville, CFB Shearwater, and CFB Petawawa) over the Fall of 2003 and Winter of 2004. A total of 14 focus groups were held, 2 at each base, consisting of one group of non-commissioned members (NCMs) and one group of officers. Because previous research had indicated that CF augmentees face particular challenges both during and post deployment, we were particularly interested in the experience of Air Force augmentees. Focus group members assisted in the further refinement of a previously developed reintegration questionnaire by reviewing the format and content but they also discussed their personal experiences with regard to integration. The focus group discussions were transcribed and entered into NUD*IST, a software tool for qualitative data analysis.

During the analyses of our focus group data, it became apparent that many issues faced by Air Force personnel and augmentees had their basis in what they considered to be issues of effective leadership. In response, this report represents a detailed examination of the focus group transcripts in terms of leadership issues in multidisciplinary Air Force teams.

The 14 main themes relating to leadership that emerged in the analysis are discussed in this report. The findings indicate that Air Force personnel perceive a profound lack of effective leadership in at least the following three regards: personnel have felt coerced into taking deployment assignments they did not want; assignments have often entailed more than one “leader,” each with his/her own agenda; and some personnel have felt that the high levels of bureaucracy have hindered their work. This study supports previous findings suggesting that augmentees are faced with extra challenges on deployment and reintegration. Furthermore, many participants from formed units (both officers and NCMs) felt that leadership in their unit had failed them upon reintegrating back into their home unit, for example, through lack of recognition. In general, deploying as an augmentee was not perceived to be a positive experience by many Air Force personnel. Lack of group cohesion, lack of teamwork, missed promotions, and lack of recognition activities were cited as issues of leadership. The need for leadership training in multidisciplinary teams is a theme that emerged from this study, since when groups are formed consisting of army, air force, and navy personnel, it is important to take into account that they are all trained differently. The effect of culture differences related to different environments (e.g., air force vs. navy vs. army) in the context of multidisciplinary teams was also cited as an issue that leadership needs to address.

Recommendations include improving overall leadership skills through training of all Air Force members, especially those in positions of leadership. Improving leadership skills of home unit leaders, especially in areas such as organizational support for Air Force augmentees, reintegration for augmentees, adequate needs assessments of augmentees upon

reintegration, communication skills, and increasing recognition of members' deployments are also recommended. Leadership training for leaders of multidisciplinary teams, particularly in the areas of culture awareness, recognizing competencies and roles in members, and developing teamwork skills among members is also suggested. Finally, training for Air Force members who will be working in multidisciplinary teams is recommended.

Sullivan-Kwantes, W., Febraro, A.R., & Blais, A.-R. (2004). Air Force Deployment Reintegration Research: Implications for Leadership. TR 2004-149. Defence Research and Development Canada - Toronto.

Sommaire

Le présent projet de recherche visait principalement à compléter les travaux déjà effectués par des membres de l'Armée de terre des FC (Thompson et Gignac, 2001) sur la réintégration post-déploiement et à acquérir une meilleure compréhension des problèmes de réintégration que connaissent les membres des FC, en particulier ceux de la Force aérienne.

À cette fin, nous avons organisé des discussions avec des groupes types constitués de 95 membres de la Force aérienne de sept bases des Forces canadiennes (BFC Trenton, BFC Comox, BFC Cold Lake, BFC Winnipeg, BFC Bagotville, BFC Shearwater et BFC Petawawa) au cours de l'automne de 2003 et de l'hiver de 2004. En tout, 14 groupes types ont été consultés, soit deux par base, c'est-à-dire un groupe de militaires du rang (MR) et un groupe d'officiers. Comme les travaux de recherche antérieurs avaient révélé que les renforts des FC se trouvaient confrontés à des défis particuliers aussi bien pendant qu'après le déploiement, nous nous sommes penchés surtout sur l'expérience vécue par les renforts de la Force aérienne. Les membres des groupes types ont contribué à améliorer un questionnaire sur la réintégration existant. En effet, ils en ont modifié la forme et le contenu, en plus de parler de leurs expériences personnelles à l'égard de l'intégration. Les propos des membres des groupes types ont été transcrits et saisis dans l'outil logiciel NUD*IST, qui analyse les données qualitatives.

Pendant l'analyse des données recueillies auprès de nos groupes types, on a constaté que bon nombre de problèmes auxquels étaient confrontés les renforts et les membres de la Force aérienne étaient liés à ce que ceux-ci considéraient comme des questions de leadership. C'est pourquoi ce rapport représente un examen détaillé des transcriptions des propos des membres des groupes types en ce qui concerne les problèmes de leadership au sein des équipes multidisciplinaires de la Force aérienne.

Les 14 principaux thèmes liés au leadership qui ont découlé de l'analyse sont abordés dans le présent rapport. Selon les résultats de l'étude, le personnel de la Force aérienne perçoit un manque criant de leadership à au moins trois égards : des membres du personnel se sont sentis forcés de participer à des déploiements contre leur gré; les missions comptaient souvent plus d'un « chef », ayant chacun leur propre programme et certains membres du personnel ont eu l'impression que la lourdeur de la bureaucratie nuisait à leur travail. Cette étude appuie les conclusions établies antérieurement, c'est-à-dire que les renforts ont davantage de défis à relever en cours de déploiement et au moment de la réintégration. De plus, de nombreux participants venant d'unités formées (tant les officiers que les MR) ont eu l'impression que la direction de leur unité ne s'était pas montrée à la hauteur lorsqu'il s'est agi de les réintégrer au sein de l'unité, par exemple, en négligeant de reconnaître leurs réalisations. En général, le personnel de la Force aérienne ne percevait pas le déploiement à titre de renfort comme étant une expérience positive. L'absence de cohésion au sein du groupe, le manque d'esprit d'équipe, les promotions manquées et le manque d'activités visant à reconnaître le travail accompli ont été cités comme des problèmes de leadership. Cette étude a fait ressortir la nécessité de former les chefs des équipes multidisciplinaires, parce que lorsque des groupes sont constitués de membres de l'Armée de terre, de la Force aérienne et de la Force maritime, il est important de tenir compte du fait qu'ils ont tous reçus une formation différentes. L'effet

des différences culturelles entre les trois armées (p. ex., force aérienne - force maritime - armée de terre) dans le contexte des équipes multidisciplinaires a également été cité comme étant un problème que la direction doit régler.

Il a été recommandé, entre autres, d'améliorer les compétences en leadership globales en dispensant une formation à tous les membres de la Force aérienne, en particulier à ceux assumant des fonctions de direction. On a également conclu qu'il fallait améliorer les compétences en leadership des chefs des unités d'appartenance, surtout dans des domaines tels que le soutien organisationnel des renforts de la Force aérienne, la réintégration des renforts, l'évaluation efficace des besoins des renforts au moment de leur réintégration, les techniques de communication et reconnaître davantage le travail accompli par les militaires ayant pris part à des déploiements. On propose aussi de dispenser de la formation en leadership aux chefs des équipes multidisciplinaires, en particulier en ce qui touche à la sensibilisation aux différentes cultures, à la reconnaissance des compétences et des rôles des membres de l'équipe et de développer l'esprit d'équipe chez les militaires. Enfin, on recommande de donner de la formation aux membres de la Force aérienne qui s'apprêtent à faire partie d'une équipe multidisciplinaire.

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Introduction

“And the Air Force, the pure Air Force doesn’t understand or care what we do or how we do it.” Canadian Air Force Officer in this study

The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF - a list of acronyms can be found on page 50) was formed on April 1, 1924. At the time, it consisted of over 250 officers and other ranks, but it was not considered an independent military service until 1938, when it gained its independence from the Canadian Army. Thereafter, the RCAF went through many changes, expansions, and cutbacks, along with a merger with the Army and Navy in the 1960s. However, the 1968 implementation of one Canadian Forces (CF) and one green uniform – known as unification – was not successful in creating one Canadian military culture. As a consequence, the three distinct services resurfaced in the mid-1980s (English, 2001).¹

The CF appears to be in the midst of change once again (Capstick, 2003). Specifically, there is now discussion of a structural re-organizing of the Canadian Air Force through the implementation of the Air Force Support Capability (AFSC). This implementation will likely require Air Force support personnel to take on new leadership roles in multidisciplinary teams.

This report highlights some of the issues involved in leading multidisciplinary teams within the Air Force, issues that were identified by members of focus groups who were originally brought together to discuss post-deployment reintegration.

Leadership

Leadership scholars have put forth many different definitions of leadership, and no one definition has been universally accepted (Yukl, 1989). Most definitions, however, involve the leader using influence to assist groups in attaining goals (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). Effective leadership in the CF is defined as "directing, motivating, and enabling others to accomplish the mission professionally and ethically, while developing or improving capabilities that contribute to mission success" (Wenek, 2004, p. 2-17).

One of the biggest challenges for the future of leadership in organizations, including the military, concerns the increasing diversity of the workplace, due to the hiring of increasing numbers of women and minority members and the globalization of the world economy. Thus, diversity may be defined in terms of gender, ethnicity, culture, race, and religion, but also in terms of other demographic attributes (e.g., age, sexual orientation); task-related knowledge, skills, and abilities; values, beliefs, and attitudes; personality, cognitive and

¹ In 1968, after unification, the Royal Canadian Air Force became known as the Canadian Air Force. Hereafter, the term *Canadian Air Force*, or simply *Air Force*, will be used in this report.

behavioural styles; and organizational status (e.g., rank, tenure, occupational specialty; McGrath, Berdhal, & Arrow, 1995). In the CF, diversity may be defined in terms of the four designated groups (women, visible minorities, aboriginal individuals, and persons with disabilities), or in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and so on, but also in terms of regular/reserve force differences, occupational classification differences, environmental differences (i.e., differences related to the army, navy, and air force), and many other attributes.

Leadership researchers agree that in order to deal with a more varied group of followers, leaders will need to develop more divergent and flexible methods. This might involve education or training in appropriate behaviours for different countries and cultures, and increasing leaders' sensitivity to issues that might not have existed with more homogenous groups. One model of leadership training (Conger, 1993), for example, suggests that leaders of diverse groups will need to develop, among other things:

- *Global awareness* – Leaders will need to have knowledge of worldwide issues that may affect an organization and the organizations with which it interacts.
- *Capability of managing highly decentralized organizations* – As more and more work is done in independently functioning teams, leaders will need to play more of a “coaching” or “consultant” role, than the traditional authority role of “boss.”
- *Sensitivity to diversity issues* – Leaders will be looked to as “diversity experts,” so they must be able to deal effectively with groups that have different values and worldviews.
- *Interpersonal skills* – The changing and expanding role of work group leaders (e.g., from “bosses” to “coaches”) will require them to become more interpersonally skilled.
- *Community-building skills* – Effective leaders will have to build work groups into cooperating, independent “communities” of workers. The leader will need to build group cohesiveness and commitment to goals. More and more, group members will turn to leaders for the “vision” of where the work group and the organization is going.

Thus, leaders of the future will need to be “culturally” flexible and adaptable if they are going to be effective in leading diverse work groups. To manage diversity, leaders will need to have considerable sensitivity, empathy, and respect for cultural differences, broadly defined, as well as skills in conflict management and team building. Lower-level leaders will need to know how to emphasize shared values, build identification with the unit, mediate conflicts, and deal proactively with incidents involving prejudice and discrimination. Leaders at all levels will need to know how to foster a climate of tolerance, mutual respect, and trust. Senior leaders will need to model and reward the attitudes and values that foster both individual and unit effectiveness, as well as mutual respect (Yukl, 1999).

Similar challenges are faced by leaders of “multidisciplinary teams” in the military (i.e., teams consisting of members from different disciplines or services, such as army vs. navy, and who possess different expertise). When leading any team, leaders must be sensitive to task interdependencies at all levels and generally strive to strengthen functional linkages (Wenek, 2004, p. 6-5). For example, as Pigeau and McCann (2000) have pointed out, “army,

navy, and air force personnel may harbour unspoken prejudices against one another,” and cultural differences among the various components of a military force may “hamper operational effectiveness” (p. 172). Indeed, resolving such differences is recognized as a major command problem. Personnel from different military services within the same nation may share national beliefs, but differ in service-specific values. Thus, establishing *common intent* in these circumstances may require considerable effort (Pigeau & McCann, 2000, p.173). According to McCann and Pigeau (2000), to be successful as a team builder, a leader must be able to recognize and select team members based on the correct mixture of competencies; instil supportive attitudes (such as respect) among team members; establish trust, confidence, and cohesion; and appropriately distribute authority and responsibility within a team (see p. 394).

Augmentees

The use of Air Force augmentees has become more commonplace in the CF in recent years. In fact, it has been suggested that reservists and augmentees may comprise up to 30% of the deployment membership in future operations (Thompson & Gignac, 2001). Augmentees may well face more chronic stress compared to members of formed units, since they usually deploy alone, sometimes with little knowledge of the tasks required for the job they are taking on, and with few pre-established interpersonal relationships within the deploying unit. This type of deployment leaves them socially isolated and can result in a negative perception of the deployment: previous research has shown that augmentees can have more negative reintegration experiences than personnel in formed units (Thompson & Gignac, 2001). The perceptions of augmentees may also be due in part to lack of support from their home units and co-workers – either during deployment or upon re-integration. The majority of the participants in this study had augmented on at least one deployment and their experiences point to some reintegration and leadership issues that were important for Air Force augmentees.

Teamwork

Needless to say, effective teams and teamwork are critical to the success of military operations. Teams can be defined as “a distinguishable set of two or more people who interact dynamically, interdependently and adaptively toward a common goal” (Blickensderfer, Cannon-Bowers, & Salas, 1997, p. 250). In order for a group of people to become a team, they must share a common goal, a commitment to purpose, and hold themselves mutually accountable (Nadjiwon-Foster, Smithers, & Livingston, 2002). Multidisciplinary or *cross-functional* teams are made up of people who typically perform different job functions in an organization, and who bring a variety of skills, expertise and experience to their teams (Nadjiwon-Foster et al., 2002). Benefits of such teams include increased task completion speed, increased capacity for solving complex problems, increased perspectives and creative capacity due to different backgrounds, and organizational learning (Nadjiwon-Foster et al., 2002).

The team formation stage is an important early step in team development. At this stage, perceptions of new structure and information that are shared between new team members provide the basis for team cohesion (Kozlowski, Gully, Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 1996). The team leader plays a key role in this stage, and can make the difference between the team

being simply a collection of individuals (which is often the case) and a truly effective team. The leader should help the team develop cohesion, commitment to the team goals, and shared attitudes, and should set an example by modeling appropriate behaviour and promoting the team mission (Kozlowski et al., 1996).

The Air Force appears to have a small proportion of personnel who normally deploy as a formed unit (usually aircrew and maintenance personnel to support a particular type of aircraft) and a larger proportion who deploy as augmentees. Thus the team formation experience for many Air Force members involves them as augmentees to an already-formed unit. As augmentees who may possibly be from a different discipline from the other team members, they must determine their role and position in the new team. Since perceptions and opinions of roles in teams are often quickly formed, it is important for leaders to set a tone conducive to teamwork from the beginning. It is also important for the leaders to provide adequate advice, support and effective communication of goals, since these factors also have a significant influence on the team (Kozlowski et al., 1996). Positive or negative team formation experiences could have an impact on how well the mission is carried out and also on augmentees' deployment experiences. As we elaborate in this report, we found evidence of the negative impact of poor team formation in our focus group data.

Team training is another critical contributor to team effectiveness, especially in environments where people are placed in dynamic, rapidly changing conditions (Stout, Salas, & Fowlkes, 1997). Often there is no formal training aimed at developing the desired skills and capabilities needed to coordinate different types of expertise for multidisciplinary teams (Kozlowski et al., 1996). Kozlowski et al. (1996) state that there is little evidence that team experience itself is an effective teacher. Furthermore, team training often focuses on social and/or interpersonal skills in isolated contexts instead of on critical teamwork skills that foster team effectiveness. This is where the team leader comes into play. Leaders should promote the inclusion and acceptance of new team members and should openly discuss appropriate behaviours, attitudes, values, rules, regulations and norms specific to interactions within the team (Kozlowski et al., 1996). Teams comprise members with individual personalities, experiences, knowledge and skills that need to be melded together for an effective unit (Kozlowski et al., 1996). The leader of the team thus plays a key role in the success of the team at the same time as setting the foundation for future team effectiveness.

The termination of teams is a topic that appears to be overlooked in the deployment process. Central Flying School (2004), in their Human Performance in Military Aviation Handbook, states that team termination, a critical stage of the team cycle, is often characterized by half-hearted debriefs, formulated reports and lack of follow-up. On the other hand, when team termination is conducted properly, there can be many positive effects on the members' perceptions of the deployment experience, which in turn helps to enhance future team performance. For this reason, and, as the results of this study will indicate, it is important to address re-integration issues and provide team members with constructive feedback, for without this feedback, reintegration and further teamwork may be difficult.

As is evident, a key factor in team performance is leadership. Organizations have realized the increasing importance of the team leader in guiding the team and helping facilitate the development of effective teams (Kozlowski et al., 1996). Kolodny and Kiggundu (1980, as cited in Nadjiwon-Foster et al., 2002) claim that effective leadership is essential to team

performance and that technical and social skills influence the leader's capabilities, the leader's relationship to the larger organization, and the quality of leadership within and across organizational units. Leaders need to enhance participation and foster interdependence and support within the team in order to keep team members working towards a common goal (Central Flying School, 2004). Sometimes when different groups are brought together to work as one cohesive team, there is a tendency for members to see things in terms of "us vs. them" (e.g., ground crew vs. aircrew; pilots vs. navigators; navigators vs. Airborne Electronic Sensor Operators; operational vs. support; air force vs. navy vs. army) (Central Flying School, 2004, p. 159). Mullen and Copper (1994) suggest that group interaction, the reality of the group (including leadership), and group size all play a role in group cohesiveness, which can have an effect on the group's efficiency. As the present study suggests, effective leadership works towards creating a common vision for the team: it looks for ways to expand team boundaries and strives to include all members.

Aim of this Analysis

The primary purpose of the present research project was to build upon previous post-deployment reintegration work done with Canadian Forces Army personnel (Thompson & Gignac, 2001) and to increase our understanding of reintegration issues in the CF, specifically in regard to the causes, correlates, and consequences of reintegration experiences. A second aim of the research was to develop a reintegration questionnaire specific to the Air Force. A third goal of the research was to identify, from Air Force members themselves, recommendations for changes that might alleviate reintegration problems. The principal method of data collection was through focus group interviews (described in detail in the next section).

During our original analyses of the focus group data, it became apparent that many issues faced by Air Force personnel and augmentees had their basis in what they considered to be leadership. Given the frequency with which leadership issues arose spontaneously from our interviews, we felt that it was a topic worthy of a separate analysis and report. This report therefore provides a detailed re-examination of the reintegration focus group transcripts in terms of leadership issues in multidisciplinary teams within the Air Force and teams formed from augmentees. However, because leadership issues were not the original focus of interest for the research project, our analysis is, at this point, only exploratory. Thus, this report represents a first step in identifying the classes of leadership issues faced by Air Force personnel in the present context.

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Method

Ninety-five Air Force personnel from seven Canadian Forces bases (i.e., CFB Trenton, CFB Comox, CFB Cold Lake, CFB Winnipeg, CFB Bagotville, CFB Shearwater, and CFB Petawawa) participated in Air Force reintegration focus groups. A total of 14 focus groups were held, two at each base. One group at each base consisted only of non-commissioned members (NCMs) and one consisted only of officers.

The 95 participants in this study were between the ages of 27 and 55 years with an average age of 40 years (see Table 1). The participants consisted of 20 women and 75 men. The seven NCM groups consisted of 37 junior NCMs and 21 senior NCMs. The seven officer groups consisted of 25 junior officers and 12 senior officers. All participants had been deployed at least once in their career with over half having been deployed on Operations Apollo and/or Athena. Seventy-nine (83%) of the participants were currently married and 81 (85%) currently had children living with them. The majority of the participants (36%) had a university or college degree, with 34% having a high school diploma. Nineteen participants (20%) had some university or college, while 6 (6%) had some high school. Three (3%) had a graduate degree.

The Air Force bases in this study were chosen for their location (to provide a cross-country sample), size and resident aircraft. Each base received a letter through the military chain of command requesting volunteers for the study. Prior to their involvement, participants received an Information Letter describing the purpose of the study, the goal of the research, and potential applications of the research, and explaining the confidential and voluntary nature of the study (see Annex A).

The focus groups were conducted in a meeting room on base in the Fall of 2003 and Winter of 2004. The participants at CFB Bagotville were given the choice of having the focus groups conducted in either French or English (they chose French). All other focus groups were conducted in English. Prior to beginning, the participants were asked for their permission to audiotape the session. It was explained that they could leave or ask to have the tape turned off at any time and that they did not have to answer any question that they did not wish to answer. All participants agreed to the use of the tape recorder. A semi-structured format was used and each focus group averaged approximately 90 minutes.

After signing the Consent Form (see Annex B), participants filled out a demographic questionnaire (see Annex C). All groups filled out this questionnaire with the exception of participants at CFB Trenton who, due to technical problems, filled out a similar one. After participants filled out the demographic questionnaire, moderators briefed the participants on the history of the project and past findings with the Army (Annex D). The participants were then asked to state their name, rank, occupation and deployment history. A questionnaire that had been developed for Army reintegration was distributed (see Annex E), and participants were given 10 minutes to read over the questionnaire. This questionnaire was used as a starting point for discussion in the focus groups. It consisted of 81 questions which were categorized into four main reintegration themes: personal, work, family, and culture. After reading the questionnaire, participants were asked questions about the format (i.e., overall

format, instructions, and rating scale) and the content of the questionnaire. Questions in each category were reviewed concerning their applicability to the Air Force. Participants were also asked to discuss their personal experiences with regard to reintegration.

A third party transcribed the audio-taped interviews. Each transcript was reviewed by one of the moderators (the first author of this report) and corrections were made when needed.

Data-analytic Approach

The focus group data were entered into the qualitative data analysis software tool NUD*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data with Indexing, Searching and Theorizing, version N6). Each transcript was coded by the first author into specific research areas pertinent to the project. Themes that emerged in the specific research areas were further explored and analysed. There were 14 main themes: augmentee issues, culture (positive/negative), deployment problems, differences between the Air Force and Army/Navy, differences between officers and NCMs, family (positive/negative), leadership (positive/negative), personal (positive/negative), reintegration issues, questionnaire (recommended changes/format), suggestions for changes in the Canadian Forces, work (positive/negative), Air Force issues, and stress. Themes and codes related to leadership, teamwork, and augmentee issues were also analysed and verified by the second author.

Results

The overall aim of the research was to identify particular sources of post-deployment reintegration concern among Air Force personnel. These data were in turn to be used to develop a survey to assess the reintegration experiences, health, and well being of members of the Air Force. Previous research with the CF Army suggested four major reintegration themes: personal, family, work, and cultural. Upon investigating the reintegration issues of greatest concern to the Air Force personnel in this study, leadership was uncovered as a major additional theme – especially in areas concerning teamwork and in respect of augmentees.

Focus Group Dynamics

All of the focus groups lasted between 1 and 2 hours. There were two instances where a member of the focus group chose to stay behind and continue speaking with the moderators about his or her reintegration experiences. This appeared to be due to the sensitive nature of the discussion.

Each group had different interpersonal dynamics. A likely reason for this could be attributed to interpersonal style, gender, rank, deployment experience, and group familiarity. There were some groups who, due to the aircraft that they supported, worked as teams. The majority of the other participants were augmentees. Brief descriptions of the groups are presented below:

Group One: This group consisted of officers and non-commissioned personnel. A range of occupations were represented in this group, including both aircrew and ground-based personnel. Participants in this group had deployed at least once and most had deployed multiple times. The location of their deployments also varied a great deal.

Group Two: This group was about evenly split between junior and senior NCMs. Again the number of deployments for the individuals in this group ranged from one to over five missions.

Group Three: This group consisted of aircrew. They had deployed on at least three tours and to a variety of locations. The members of this group had had the opportunity to work together, which led to quite a relaxed discussion.

Group Four: This group consisted of senior and junior NCMs. They had deployed a number of times, with the majority having experienced two tours each. The group members also brought experience from a variety of deployment locations. This group also tended to deploy as a unit, and all the participants knew each other. Although a number of issues were discussed throughout the two hours, financial concerns, especially consequences for family, dominated the discussion. Poor leadership and negative treatment and perception of the Air Force were also key issues in discussion.

Group Five: The participants in this group were all officers from a variety of ranks. All had at least one deployment, although in general this group had fewer deployments than the other groups in this study. A range of occupational MOCs were represented. The members of this

group had deployed to a variety of regions, including some in North America. Interestingly, the participants expressed the feeling that deploying within North America was just as stressful as deploying overseas, if not more so. Negative leadership issues also emerged in the discussions of this group.

Group Six: Senior and junior NCMs participated in this discussion group. Participants had deployed at least twice, and some more than five times. A variety of occupations and deployment locations were represented. This group was very relaxed and appreciated the opportunity to discuss their deployment and reintegration experiences. Teamwork, augmentee issues, and lack of support from the CF and from the Air Force in particular were thoroughly discussed. There was one member who stayed behind the group to further discuss his personal experiences.

Group Seven: This group had approximately equal numbers of junior and senior officers and also reflected a variety of military occupations. Numerous participants in all the focus groups had commented on the overall stress of reintegration, some claiming it was worse for people who experienced only one deployment, and others claiming it was worse for people who had experienced multiple deployments, as they would suffer from accumulated stress. Emotions ran high for a couple of these participants, debating whether the 6-month deployment or the three 56-day rotation deployments was more problematic. The negative impact of deployments on families, especially the 56-day deployments, was a major concern for this group. Members of this group had deployed in a variety of operations.

Group Eight: This group consisted of junior and senior NCMs. The participants in this group experienced a range of tours, both in terms of number and locations of deployments. This group got along well and most members did not have a problem discussing their personal experiences. One participant spoke extensively about his life-changing deployment experiences and the stress he encountered. Family problems due to deployment were also one of the major issues discussed. This group also discussed the 56-day deployments, commenting that this was more stressful on the family and themselves personally than were longer deployments.

Group Nine: This group contained junior and senior officers and five junior aircrew officers. The members of this group had deployed between one and five times to a variety of deployment locales, including within North America. This group tended to have reservations concerning the study itself and did not tend to discuss issues in detail.

Group 10: This was one of our largest groups and was comprised of NCMs. They represented a range of occupations and deployments, bringing a variety of experiences to the group. Although at first there was some reluctance to discuss, as time went on trust emerged and discussion flowed more easily. One issue raised in this group was that support systems tend to be non-existent for non-overseas deployments and furthermore, the consequences of this are ignored.

Group 11: This group consisted of junior and senior officers, who had deployed between one and three times to a variety of locations. The interpersonal relations in this group were very positive and this group was very excited about the opportunity to discuss their deployment experiences. This group also commented on their dissatisfaction with the number of

questionnaires they are completing, and the lack of reports on results. Fifty-six day rotation deployments, lack of support from the CF and Air Force, and augmentee issues were all major discussion topics in this group.

Group 12: This focus group was made up primarily of junior NCMs. A range of occupations and deployments were reflected. This group also had very good interpersonal relations and were pleased to discuss their personal deployment experiences. This group was most displeased with leadership and support from their Wing while away on deployment. They were also discouraged by the fact that they do not see results from their efforts of filling out questionnaires. Teamwork issues, leadership issues, poor relations with the Army, and camp bureaucracy were key areas that were discussed.

Group 13: This group contained junior officers, and were mainly aircrew. They had deployed between one and three times. Some had been deployed on 56-day rotations.

Group 14: This group consisted of junior ranks exclusively. A range of occupations were represented in this group. These individuals had deployed between one and three times. The majority of participants had deployed on 56-day rotations and the members of this group had deployed both outside and inside North America. The group discussion started with the participants stating that if this research was a university study, they did not want to participate. These members explained that they were tired of spending their time filling out questionnaires and not seeing any results or being informed about the results. After we explained that we were working for the Canadian Forces, and that we would in fact return to present to them the results of our study, they agreed to participate. This group worked together as a unit and they had positive interpersonal relations. They appeared relaxed and were comfortable discussing their personal experiences with the group.

Who is Air Force Support?

We began this project with the intention of interviewing Air Force support personnel. We did not realize until we started the focus groups that there was controversy over who Air Force support personnel actually *were*. During one of our discussions, we were faced with “support trades” who did not want to be considered Air Force support. We also encountered those who considered themselves the “hard core trades,” and who also did not want to be considered Air Force support. The sentiment is expressed clearly in the excerpt below, from a conversation among NCMs in one focus group:

“I think you’ve missed the whole concept of support...of support people.”²

“...right now you have a lot of support trades sitting at this table and most of us, we’ve all come from Army bases. We’ve done Army tours. Some of us have been posted on the Air Force base and we get sent on Air Force tours...there aren’t many hard Air Force trades here.”

² Although the focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim, the excerpts that are presented in this report have been edited slightly to enhance their readability or to protect the identity of participants. Further, three ellipsis points (...) within a sentence were used to indicate that material was omitted from the original interview transcript. Square brackets were used to enclose material (e.g., additions or explanations) inserted in a quotation by the principal investigator.

“...because you’re saying now you’re doing it for the Air Force, but again we support all three elements, so I don’t know if you could do basically one [questionnaire] for hard core Air Force, one for hard core Army and hard core Navy and then others and unfortunately we would fall into that other category, so if you’re in elements that is considered support trade, then you fill in this survey. I don’t know.”

“When I say that support group and again – not knocking these guys but they’re all support trade – I shouldn’t be here. They’re saying, I’m considered the hard Air Force for lack of a better term. Even though we tag along with these guys...but they are the support group. We are not.”

The issue of identifying who is Air Force was also raised in English’s (2004) report on current leadership development in the Air Force. English points out that identifying who belong to the Air Force is key in determining who will require training in Air Force leadership skills, techniques, and competencies.

Leadership Issues in Team Formation

What is the role of the leader in the formation of a team? From our interviews, it became apparent that Air Force personnel sense a profound lack of effective leadership in team formation. We identified three areas that seemed most prominent. First, personnel have felt coerced into taking assignments they did not want. Second, assignments have often entailed more than one “leader,” each with his or her agenda. Finally, within a camp, some personnel have felt that the high levels of bureaucracy have hindered their work.

Choice vs. Coercion. In the focus groups, we were given examples where personnel indicated that they did indeed have a choice in whether they deployed. The participants in that focus group saw this as an indication of good leadership. In the words of one NCM:

“You know, we’re all from an Army background. I’m not saying that’s any better, any worse, but we pretty much sat down in the office and we said, ‘Okay, we have these places to fill. Who wants to go, who doesn’t want to go? And when and why don’t you want to go?’ And amongst ourselves we picked our own positions. And if there was something come up where the guy couldn’t do the second or third tour, we addressed it, we made it happen, the changes were there. So, it worked really easy that way...and that comes from not the system, I think that’s the leadership.”

However, some of the officers we spoke with stated quite plainly that coercion was often used when determining who was going on a deployment. According to one officer:

“The reality is we’re not supposed to deploy a year after you’ve been gone for six months...and any Sergeant come up and says you know, you’re going. Go! Go sign the waiver. If he wants to get promoted, he’s not signing it under free will. He’s signing it because if he doesn’t, his career is screwed

and he's going to be painted or brushed...whether it is going to affect his family or not."

Identifying the Leader. For newly deployed teams, it was sometimes difficult to determine who the leader actually was – who was in the real position of authority. Poor quality leadership in these camps caused great stress to the Air Force members, both officers and NCMs. One officer in the excerpt below expresses the stress:

“But holy geez, it was tough! The chain of command, the way it was organized, the Commander being in [North America] and the fighting of the four unit Commanders on the camp, having equal authority. So there was always fighting between them, you know, these guys doing that, these guys doing this...that was kind of frustrating and in fact, our level were feeling the frustration. The lower levels were being yanked around and pushed around. They didn’t like that too much.”

From the perspective of one NCM:

“It was kingdom building...Well, in our particular situation, our little bosses wanted to build their own little kingdom to control us as well...so they’re always doing this little kingdom building and they’re creating more stress on us. That’s why we were glad to get the hell out of there...we felt safer flying over enemy territory than we were down in camp because you never know what was coming next because they were all in their own little world. They caused us more stress through silliness like that than they did if they were to have left us alone to do our jobs the way we were supposed to do them.”

Bureaucracy. Many personnel also commented that they felt frustrated and stressed by the camp’s bureaucracy. According to one NCM:

“We found the bureaucracy in the camp causes more stress than actually flying over hostile territory. Because when we were out there, we all know our jobs, we were all working as a team. As soon as we got back to camp, oh God, look at the garbage they have us doing now!”

Similarly, another NCM expressed a sense of frustration in these words:

“I understand what they’re saying about the stressors that were in the camp...I saw very closely exactly what some of the stress that was going on and it was almost like when I was there I found there were different groups. I think most of us were part of the [Air Force] and it was a whole different entity...as compared to this camp in general. The camp had a bureaucracy and that’s what frustrated a lot of us, is that we were a little Air Force deployment...and I think all of us felt that we were a little separate entity...”

Leadership Issues for Augmentees

Augmentees are faced with extra challenges on deployment. Not only must they function adequately in their role, they are forced to fit into an already established social network, often under an unknown chain of command. From our interviews, we uncovered five areas of concern for augmentees: lack of belonging, lack of organizational support, lack of support from the home unit, lack of group cohesion, and issues related to promotion and recognition. With respect to leadership, augmentees felt a sense of disappointment in their leaders (both on deployment and at home base) and in their units for not being as supportive as they would have liked them to be.

Lack of Belonging. Deploying as an augmentee was not looked upon as a positive experience by many Air Force personnel. Many of the Air Force support personnel who participated in our focus groups, both officers and NCMs, considered themselves augmentees or *purple people*, as one officer noted:

“...and just to give you an adjective – resentful – where purple people really experience some of these things is the battalion or if you’re hooked into a formation that’s gone...” (Officer)

“You know what?...a negative from an Air Force perspective is that we get scattered across. We wish we would have stayed with our unit.” (Officer)

“I think you need to concentrate more on people that are augmentees ...concentrate on setting up something so they know how to treat the people they are bringing in...because the biggest stress and the biggest problems I had in my tour was that co-ordination...it just doesn’t work.” (NCM)

Lack of Organizational Support. Many of the Air Force augmentees felt that the challenges they faced deploying as augmentees were being ignored by both the Air Force in general and their senior officers. Below is an excerpt from a conversation in which augmentees (all NCMs) felt unsupported by both their new deployment units and their home units.

“...they don’t seem to care, we’re getting you to Trenton and then after that...”

“You’re on your own...”

“...So as it turned out we arrived [earlier than expected]. My flight was the [next] morning and I didn’t have a hotel or anything. They expected us, which I did, I waited at the airport until my [morning flight].”

Lack of Support from Home Unit. There were also a number of cases in which augmentees felt that they were excluded, both by the units with which they were deployed and their home units. This was especially evident at Christmas. The augmentees did not blame their Military Family Resource Centres (MFRCs) as much as they blamed their leaders. Below is an excerpt from a conversation among NCMs:

“No support. Absolutely none.” “Zero, zero, zero. I was there over Christmas. Not even a Christmas card from anybody.”

“That’s one of the things too, our guys, they watched [CFB X] open up Christmas gifts in front of them. It was a must-attend Christmas party...Ours did nothing. How insulting.”

“Yeah, but that is where our leadership here in [Canada] failed...that comes down right to the individual supervisors, right up to the Wing Commander.”

“Well, an officer went on the tour, just before I went. They sent him a [gift]. It wasn’t even over a holiday or anything. They sent him a huge [gift], everybody contributing and when I went over on my tour, I didn’t even get a card...and when I questioned it, it was ‘we were too busy.’ You were too busy to send me, little NCM, even a Christmas card. Even a Christmas card to say Merry Christmas. But you’ll send an officer over that ... stuff and that’s bullshit.”

The sentiment was echoed by another NCM, quoted below:

“Whatever base is running the deployment needs to be more aware of the needs of people that are augmenting them and you need to be treated fairly. You can’t be left out at Christmas for crying out loud! I mean, how stupid is that?”

Interestingly, officers were also aware of this problem:

“...and just to give you an adjective – resentful – where purple people really experience some of these things is the battalion or if you’re hooked into a formation that’s gone...the MFRC here, locally spent all kind of time and resources making sure that the battalion spouses and Christmas boxes and things got over to the battalion members, the Army. And in some of those areas of operations...the purple people...they wouldn’t get it. They don’t get the same package because they’re onesies and twosies.”

Still other NCMs voiced their perceptions about the lack of support from their home unit for augmentees:

“Normally I think in other deployments, there’s one that goes from [this base and that base], one goes from here. You get little pieces from everywhere, but because we’re rotating with all in one area, all at the same time, we don’t have the proper resources to deal with our people when we come back. Because I felt I was neglected and I got to the point where I thought ‘I’m going to stand up and I went out and I said, somebody help me. I need a social worker, I need somebody. I said, I’m losing it.’ So, it got to the point that I did get help, but do you expect the average person to stand up? No. There should be some support net at some level and increased...my unit left me alone. They never talked to me, they never...”

“Well, you get back to work – ‘How was your TD or how was your trip? Oh, fine.’ And that’s the end of it. Like, well, come on into my office. Let’s have a little bit of a discussion...are the bosses trained...to a certain level to bring in their subordinates and say okay, ‘Let’s have a discussion. Do you have any problems dealing with stresses right now? Do you have any family problems? Do you need help from the social worker, Padre, that kind of thing?’”

“Well, it’s the same with the signing sheet. The CO is supposed to sign the sheet. They took my sheet, gave it to the CO. I didn’t talk to the CO at all, both leaving and coming back. They signed it and gave it back to me, so they don’t want to know how I’m feeling, how I’m doing.”

Many of the Air Force augmentees who participated in focus groups felt unsupported by their home units while on deployment. They felt the absence of a rear party and saw this as a reflection of base leaders not supporting them. Below is an excerpt from a conversation among officers:

“In the Air Force when you get people from all different units going, I think it’s much less co-ordinated.”

“A rear party doesn’t really exist for us.”

“I don’t think there’s a rear party. There certainly wasn’t for us anyway.”

“I think that’s a huge downfall.”

Group Cohesion. Group cohesion and teamwork were also issues for augmentees. The following quotes are a few examples of Air Force personnel commenting on the lack of group cohesion. In the conversation presented below, the participants, all officers, are talking about a group of people who all think they know the best way to do things. In this group there is no cohesion:

“..the reality of that location, because it’s all augmentees...it’s not a group, a mass group that’s gone. You’ve got 10 people, a section from five different bases. You got six different ideas.”

“There’s no cohesiveness.”

“You got six ideas about the way you want to do something, so there’s way more area for tension than there is when you deploy the whole...”

“It makes you very resentful.”

In the next example we encounter the opposite problem, that of *too much* cohesion, indicating that cohesion is a double-edged sword. The group that augmentees join can be so cohesive that it will not include the newcomer augmentees. The excerpt below is from a conversation between NCMs:

“Just from being on an Army base and I was with the group and if we ever had augmentees, you always in a sense kind of pushed them aside. It is harder if you are the augmentee because you are not necessarily part of the group, they’re a bit ostracized...”

“Yeah, you are an outcast.”

In a similar vein, the officer quoted below also speaks of the problem of ostracism.

“...My friends who came to the Army, they did their predeployment training as a group. They were a team and we got satellite into that and you got to develop that, that’s a stress that goes with us...and then when you depart again, they all go off together and you got back to wherever you came from...Welcome to the Air Force! You find out you’re the United Way Chairperson! You need to change your approach, they’re not going to change the way they are. You have to become part of them, or you’ll be an outsider and I’ve seen it, where someone has been completely ostracized.”

Comments from a group of NCMs further supported this:

“...cause I found we had a rotation come in half way through our rotation...so we built a really big connection with those people, but also those people come in and felt some people ignored them because they only came in half, we’ve been here three months longer than you have, so you don’t really count.”

“That’s what happens on every tour though.”

These comments are indicative of a leadership issue, in that an effective leader needs to know the ways in which cohesion can harm group performance as well as enhance it, and thus prevent the negative impact of too much cohesion.

Promotion and Recognition. Augmentees in the Air Force often fall through the cracks when it comes to recognition, promotions, screenings, PERs, and support from their leaders. In the words of two NCMs:

“When I deployed to [deployment location], I wasn’t part of the unit but being deployed as a unit, so when I came back it was just ‘bye, bye.’”

“I find when you come back into this experience in the Air Force deployment, you’re not deploying as a mass group like the Army does. You’re coming back as an individual, coming back into an individual setting and the support unit and I didn’t find the questions in here addressed all the...singleness of coming back.”

The excerpt below is from a conversation among NCMs about the impact of their deployments on PERs:

“You get boned on your PER which nobody ever tells you when you leave because now you get an out of season PER...so, there’s all sorts of issues that really need to be addressed and they just seem to be forgotten no matter how many times you bring them up.”

“I got back in March from my tour, didn’t get my PER till October.”

“I got mine the day before I left. I couldn’t get anything changed on it.”

“So, actually volunteering to help is actually hurting ’cause when I left, I left in January so I had an out of season PER, so I can’t be ranked in the Wing.”

A similar theme was expressed in another conversation among NCMs, quoted below:

“If it’s done, your PER in theatre is...”

“...the cut-off.”

“They don’t want to see what you’ve done. Whether you did well in theatre or not. Did poorly in theatre. They don’t want to see that.”

A lack of recognition from leaders either on deployment or back in their home units was one significant way in which many participants felt that leadership had failed them. According to one officer:

“Yeah, I think it’s back to a leadership thing. The Air Force, in my mind, the Air Force leadership isn’t doing enough to stand us up and say look, we can’t do it the Army way. Give us the recognition for the job we’re actually doing because unlike the battalions that go away, they turn off the lights...we come back but the planes are still flying...there is no such thing as down time in the Air Force.”

Leadership Issues in Multidisciplinary Teams

One of the issues facing multidisciplinary teams is training. Army, air force, and navy personnel are trained differently, and this fact needs to be taken into account when they are brought together as a team. During the focus groups, there were a number of issues identified concerning training and leadership in multidisciplinary teams, teams in which different cultural norms and values, a lack of team integration, and even “colour-centrism,” may exist.

Proper Training. Many Air Force personnel felt that they lacked appropriate training. They felt that this lack was a problem that Air Force leaders and the organization need to address. They look to their leaders for guidance about what to do when ordered by either the Army or Navy personnel to complete tasks for which they did not have the proper training. They felt that their leaders were failing them in this respect. In the words of one NCM:

“Well if this [the focus group] gets taped and it ever goes to someone that can do something about it and can make a policy, we have never had any real policy on what the Air Force is responsible for. We seem to be at the whim of the Navy...a lot of people were asked to do sentry duty, which is a highly responsible job. You’re literally the first line of defence...we were given no weapon training, we were given no combatant training, how to deal with belligerence. If we are going to ask us to do things, there’s got to be a policy set down so people can get the proper training for these things.”

Team Integration. Teamwork among multidisciplinary teams was found to be an issue among the Air Force personnel who participated in the focus groups. Many Air Force personnel reported that they found it difficult to integrate with a new unit during deployment. Specifically, Air Force personnel indicated that they often felt left “out of the loop” when joining multidisciplinary teams, because they are often trained apart and were expected to integrate on site. They explicitly cited this problem as having its basis in leadership. According to two NCMs:

“I think it takes longer for us to work as a team because we’re separated...at least the Army comes in and they can start from the get-go and they know exactly who is doing what and where is everything going, and how to do it. But we’re talking 300 people ... in a unit and...who are you? What do you do? So, we have a big learning curve at the beginning because we are mish-mashed together. That’s the hard part. But I think it is leadership issues versus personal issues...adaptability between the two different groups. So things are mostly leadership issues.”

“...In the firefighters, there are the pilots, and there are the techs, and they almost don’t speak, except when they get to the plane. A few of them may befriend each other, but aside from that, they don’t speak.”

Culture. Culture shock in the context of deployment was one topic that our initial questionnaire addressed. Interestingly, a number of Air Force participants noted that they felt more stressed about the cultural differences between the Air Force and the Army/Navy than they felt about the culture shock of living in another country. In the words of one officer:

“In my case, one of the things that I found harder is not necessarily the culture shock between the [host nation] and the Canadian, but the culture shock between the Army and the Air Force, strangely enough. That’s one thing I found very frustrating.”

Similar themes were expressed by NCMs:

“Going from working always on an Air Base to having to work with an Army unit – things are done quite a bit differently than they are on an Air Force Base, so that, in itself could be a culture shock.”

“We end up in a bit of a mixed bag here because we’re Air Force. We go on a ship...and at the same time we’re told ‘you’re here on this deployment, you

belong to the ship'. We come back here, we're still Air Force. We wear the blue uniform and you Navy guys over there, well, we're not Navy and that is one of the hardest things I think is trying to keep our Air Force individuality with deployments."

Clearly, cultural differences are an area of concern for leaders of multidisciplinary teams on deployments. When leading a team that consists of Air Force, Army, and Navy personnel, leaders need to be aware of the additional stresses that arise from service differences and should promote group cohesion and teamwork despite these differences. Air Force personnel could also be trained to properly manage the cultural differences within the CF. In the example below, which relates part of a conversation among NCMs, an effective leader is a person who can act as a buffer between two distinct cultures while at the same time take care of his or her people:

"I hope I'm not going to upset the Chief, but what I would like to see to improve our life at sea on any deployment is someone who has our best interest in mind... I've seen it that generally the Commander, the Det Commander doesn't necessarily have our best interests at heart. His whole focus is the aircraft."

"As a Det Chief, that's my job to have your interest. That's all my job is really. I'm a buffer between the ship to keep them off your back and if I don't do my job right, that's where you guys are going to feel it... and that's unfortunate that sometimes, you get some [people] that can sort of get along with the Navy and make it work and you get some that are just battling all the time... See, the air craft itself, if it all works the way on paper... my job as Det Chief is to sit down and make sure that the Air department, the air crew itself don't inflict themselves on the maintenance too much, just keep them off your back. Now again, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. It all depends who the coxswain is. The coxswain may be somebody that doesn't care."

"That's where the leadership issues come to play."

"Exactly..."

Colour-centrism. The following quote shows the lack of confidence that leaders in multidisciplinary teams can have in augmentees simply because they come from a different "colour" or environment. In the words of one officer, who was considered inadequate for this reason:

"So, the [senior officer] told me 'you are not a f...king Air Force officer' ...he was very belligerent you know. He had no confidence in my capacities whatsoever and he was always doubting me. Simply because I was Air Force... These kinds of assumptions were very hard to deal with during the tour."

A similar frustration, with a lack of understanding or recognition of the Air Force, was expressed by the officer quoted below:

“When I was [on deployment], my boss was an Army Major...so they don’t know anything about the Air Force. I had to go back to basics every time I had to explain something, like why I needed the runway swept for an airplane.”

Leadership Issues From Home Units During Deployment

The following quotes are examples of some of the participants’ thoughts on leadership from their home units. In the same way as the augmentees who were interviewed, the formed units also felt a lack of support from their home bases and leaders while on deployment. The types of support that were considered lacking ranged from officers simply knowing who was on deployment and who came back, to having support from the home unit in the form of a rear party. The excerpt quoted below is from a conversation among officers:

“...They had no idea I was even gone....nobody was the wiser...nobody had a clue. That’s a huge thing for the Air Force side. It’s different from the Army because you go as a unit.”

“That should be a leadership thing as well. I don’t know if it’s strictly an Air Force thing, but if you had a boss somewhere, regardless of whether you went with [Squadron X] or not, I mean, if some of your troops are gone, you’re supposed to make sure that you look after your troops right?”

Similar frustrations regarding a lack of support were expressed by NCMs:

“Because they take people from all these little bases and put them into one big pot. Now we are all supposed to work together. That works good and fine, but there are going to be problems and when you get back, no one wants to hear about them because they don’t care. Like I said, this Base failed miserably to support the personnel they sent over.”

The excerpt below is from a conversation among NCMs, in which the lack of a rear party is emphasized:

“I think that’s one thing with the Air Force, it’s different. I mean, in the Army, if you deploy as a unit...you have the rear party and everything and everyone’s a unit. But in the Air Force when you get people from all different units going, I think it’s much less co-ordinated.”

“A rear party doesn’t really exist for us.”

“I don’t think there’s a rear party. There certainly wasn’t for us anyway... I think that’s a huge downfall.”

Even within the same base, there were many examples in which there was variability in perceptions of how much support was received from leaders. The following excerpt is from a conversation among NCMs:

“I only did it twice. I was on it for three [56-day deployments] but they took me off and they said no, all air crew will only do two...Of course, we’ve got officers on our side that make changes for us. See [speaking to another participant], my advantage is that I’m sitting in that situation whereas you’re not. You’re not in that situation because look at the officers that are supporting you. You’ve got a few officers supporting you and that’s it. So, there’s the difference.”

“Jell-O has more support!”

Leadership Issues in Reintegration

One area in which many of the participants in all the focus groups felt that the leadership in their unit failed them was upon reintegrating back into their home unit. One aspect of this was lack of recognition upon returning from deployment. Below is an excerpt from a conversation between two NCMs:

“When the Army gets back from deployment there’s...banners and welcome home from [deployment location] to the Army...Did they welcome back the clerks? Did anybody? There’s nothing...you show up and they’re ‘Oh, when did you get home?’”

“I know, I think that’s just the boss though, very honestly ’cause I can tell you that our guys going there...Not because the [senior officer] thought of it, because my Chief Warrant Officer and my CO’s went to the [senior officer] and said, ‘I got ... guys leaving here next week. I think you should say goodbye.’ And guilted him into it. He said goodbye alright, but he never talked to us when we came back.”

One officer described the situation in these words:

“The Army with big units get recognized...Augmentees don’t get recognized and the Air Force...and support trades don’t get recognized at all.”

As the following quote from an NCM indicates, one can even sometimes be a stranger to one’s leader.

“Well, you said when you come back you feel like a...stranger...I’m still waiting to be welcomed back by my own Commander here on this base!”

Similarly, the quotes below indicate that sometimes one can also be a stranger to one’s unit. The first excerpt is from a conversation among NCMs:

“...and then you had people at work basically saying, ‘I haven’t seen you for a while – where were you?’”

“Where did you get that suntan?”

“They are totally oblivious.”

“Did you just get back from leave? Were you in Mexico?”

“I had one person say ‘Are you new here?’ I’ve only been here four years!”

The following excerpt is from a conversation among NCMs:

“You get back, you’re gone for six months and you get back and your job has been modified because somebody else has taken up the slack and you want to try and get back those reins into your own hands so you can handle it and then all of a sudden, you’re not really, you’re like the stranger...in your unit. You’ve been gone for six months and...”

“You don’t belong. You don’t feel like you belong.”

“You’re not recognized...for what you did in theatre. Your boss doesn’t want to have nothing to know about what you’ve done.”

“That’s a good point.”

A similar sentiment was expressed by the NCM quoted below when discussing what happens when one returns from a deployment:

“Where I work, it’s a very tight group...we all know everybody’s business and it’s great. You go away and then you come back and it’s you’re kind of like an outsider... ‘Oh, what the hell with you...you don’t belong to us anymore.’ Sometimes it’s a little bit hard.”

Similar concerns regarding the lack of recognition upon returning from deployment were also expressed by officers. According to one officer:

“We had guys that had issues when they were overseas and...the Commander was dealing with it that day fixing it. When I was ... with NATO did I hear from anyone in Canada? No. When I got back, did anyone talk to me? No. I just showed up back to work and...it’s back to work as normal.”

Many of the Air Force participants felt ignored by their supervisors upon returning to work after their deployment. They felt that their leaders were not interested in hearing about their experiences on deployment and that their leaders were uninterested in their well being. This lack of interest often caused Air Force personnel to “fall through the cracks” so that their personal and work issues went unnoticed. The Air Force participants saw this lack of interest

as an indication of poor leadership and of not being looked after by their leaders and the Air Force in general. In the words of one NCM:

“...Nobody came to me and said ‘How you doing?’ Nobody came to say do you need psychological help? Do you need a social worker? Do you need Padre? Do you need any of those core services after losing a loved one?”

Similar themes were expressed by the NCM quoted below, who emphasized the importance of recognizing people who have come back from deployment, and of taking care of their reintegration needs:

“There is something...that I think is very important. To recognize people that have come back and...what they had to live through out there is very important to the people...to get a feel of this person. Obviously, as a supervisor you want to know how your person is going to react to coming back to work.... I think that as a supervisor, knowing that there is something wrong with that person, that you can go further to seek the help that that person needs...It’s not necessarily that you have to have certain skill sets in order to debrief that person, but if you were my immediate supervisor and you pull me into the office and I tell you I’ve got problems and you say, ‘Okay, I can get you the help that you need. I’ll give a call to the hospital...I’ll call the social worker and I’ll say I need immediate assistance for that person now. Not tomorrow, now.’ ... You know, you’ve got that pull. Or, as the lower ranks go, take it up to the chain of command.”

The following excerpt, which also speaks to the issue of reintegration after deployment, is from a conversation among officers:

“I think a point was brought up that you may want to answer directly is, did you feel [that] the leadership supported you reintegrating into the workplace? Because that was a big issue we said – nobody there to meet you...your desk wasn’t ready, you moved and nobody told you, you didn’t have a key, no transportation...they just carried on with their job and pretty well forgot that you were gone.”

“Well, it’s a leadership role. It’s as if your boss can’t even take care of you.”

“That’s needs to be addressed.”

A similar point was made by the officer quoted below who was posted immediately after his deployment:

“One of the things I found I was actually posted, so I didn’t even go back to the same job or city. So...there’s no tracking in between.”

Many Air Force participants, such as the two NCMs quoted below, also faced the problem of re-establishing their role and authority upon reintegrating into their home units.

“...You’re the only one that left. You’re the only one that changed. Everyone else stayed the same...So, you come back and as I said, you try, and it’s almost like you have to try and fit in again...and remind people who you were or what position you held prior to leaving...Some other people may have taken over that position while you were gone, but it wasn’t theirs to keep forever and you come back and you take it from them. That is your position, and so it is a little bit distressing, because it is almost like you have to prove yourself again.”

“...Walking back into the unit from my perspective, I found it harder to fit back in because the gaps when I left were now being saddled on to somebody else because the function still has to be done...And so to start to move back into those and grab those different parts that made your job up, try and grab those back, or to fit into a new job, sometimes it is a little bit difficult.”

The following excerpt, in which similar frustrations are expressed, is from a conversation among officers:

“I think for the Detachment Commander...you’re at sea and you can make a lot of decisions and you come back at the squadron and you go way down the list.”

“It’s hilarious! Yeah, I could authorize almost anything at sea and I can authorize the square root of that much around here.”

“A leave pass?”

“Not at Christmas!”

Examples of Effective Leadership

There were only a few instances in all of the focus groups where a participant commended the quality of leadership in the Air Force. This is a disturbing fact considering that 95 Air Force personnel were interviewed. The following excerpt is from a conversation among NCMs:

“Actually the [officer] in charge of us over in [deployment location], he did a handwritten 2-page letter to my husband thanking me for my support in the deployment. He did a handwritten letter to everybody I worked with. If you weren’t married he sent it to your parents.”

“But that’s just one guy that makes that effort right?”

“Yeah, one person can change the world.”

The following quote is from an NCM who was greeted by her leadership upon returning from deployment:

“...When I landed, I got off the plane, I came down the thing and [several senior officers from my unit were there]...and I thought there was someone important on my flight... They didn’t come over to see me right at first. So my husband was there and my niece and my neighbour and then all of a sudden I see these guys staring at me and so I go over. I go ‘hey, how’s it going?’ They’re like, oh, ‘we just came to see you. We thought we’d just give you a minute with your family first.’”

Indeed, it was clear from the focus groups that an important aspect of effective leadership in the context of deployments and reintegration is *recognizing* the efforts of multidisciplinary teams and augmentees upon completion of their deployment.

Discussion

The present focus group-based research builds upon previous post-deployment reintegration work with CF Army personnel (Thompson & Gignac, 2001) and examines issues faced by Air Force personnel and augmentees regarding leadership issues in multidisciplinary teams. Previous research has shown that augmentees may have more negative reintegration experiences than those experienced by personnel in formed units (Thompson & Gignac, 2001). This may be due, in part, to a lack of support from their home units and co-workers while on deployment (e.g., in the form of a rear party) and a lack of support from their co-workers and commanders upon reintegrating into their home unit. The findings in this study highlight many of these reintegration work and leadership issues within multidisciplinary teams in the Air Force.

One of the first issues that emerged during the focus groups was the question of “who” Air Force support personnel actually were. Some members of “support trades” did not want to be considered Air Force support, nor did some of those who considered themselves the “hard core trades.” As noted earlier, the issue of identifying who is Air Force has also been brought up in English’s (2004) report on the current leadership development in the Air Force, as it has implications for identifying those who will require training in the skills, techniques and competencies to lead multidisciplinary support teams.

Moreover, the findings of this study indicate that Air Force personnel perceive a profound lack of effective leadership in at least three areas. First, personnel have felt coerced into taking deployment assignments they did not want. Second, assignments have often entailed more than one “leader,” each with his/her own agenda. Third, some personnel have felt that the high levels of bureaucracy have hindered their work. In terms of choice versus coercion, participants indicated that being given a choice regarding whether or not to go on deployment was an indication of effective leadership. With respect to the issue of identifying the leader, participants indicated that confusion in this area caused great stress among Air Force members, both officers and NCMs. Indeed, research on *leadership teams* (i.e., situations in which multiple leaders of a unit form a leadership team) suggests that confusion over role definition and scope of responsibility among leaders can lead to an overlap of functions, lack of mutual trust, and tension among leaders. Research on platoon leadership teams in the US Army suggests that leaders should strive to clarify their mutual roles and increase their cohesion with each other, in order to present a unified group to followers and enhance unit functioning (Mael & Alderks, 1993). Many personnel also commented that they felt frustrated and stressed by the deployment camp’s bureaucracy. Overall, augmentees reported a sense of disappointment in their leaders (both on deployment and at home base) and in their units, for not being as supportive as they would have liked them to be.

This study supports previous findings suggesting that augmentees are faced with extra challenges on deployment. In addition to the usual challenges associated with functioning in their role, they are forced to fit into an already established social network, often under an unfamiliar chain of command. From our interviews, five areas of concern emerged: lack of belonging, lack of organizational support, lack of support from the home unit, lack of group

cohesion, and issues related to promotion and recognition. In general, deploying as an augmentee was not perceived as a positive experience by many Air Force personnel. In addition to a lack of sense of belonging, many of the Air Force augmentees felt that the challenges they faced as augmentees were ignored by both the Air Force in general and their senior officers. There were also cases in which augmentees reported that they felt excluded, both by the units with which they were deployed and their home units. This was especially salient at Christmas (especially when non-augmentees received gifts but augmentees did not), or was noticed in the form of a lack of a rear party. Once again, augmentees perceived this lack of organizational support as a leadership issue.

Lack of group cohesion and teamwork were also issues for augmentees, and were associated with leadership. In particular, participants felt that assembling a team from different bases made it difficult to develop cohesion and that, indeed, without effective leadership, it engendered tension and resentment. On the other hand, participants also indicated that *too much* cohesion was also a problem, in that the group that augmentees joined was often so cohesive that it would ostracize the newcomers. This, too, was perceived as a problem of leadership.

Issues regarding promotion and recognition of deployment activities were also raised in this study. As discussed in the focus groups, augmentees in the Air Force often fall through the cracks when it comes to recognition, promotions, screenings, PERs, and support from their leaders. Indeed, a lack of recognition from leaders, either on deployment or back in their home units, was a major way in which many participants felt that leadership had failed them.

One of the key leadership issues facing multidisciplinary teams that emerged from this study concerns *training*. When groups are formed consisting of army, air force, and navy personnel, it is important to take into account that they are all trained differently. Many Air Force personnel felt that they lacked appropriate training, and that this was an issue that leaders and the Air Force organization need to address. Related to the training issue, the development of *teamwork* among multidisciplinary teams was also reported as an issue in this study. Many Air Force personnel reported that they found it difficult to integrate with a new unit during deployment, and that they often felt left “out of the loop” when forced to join multidisciplinary teams, because the members often trained apart and were forced to integrate on site. Participants explicitly attributed this difficulty in developing teamwork to ineffective leadership.

Culture shock related to different environments (e.g., Air Force vs. Navy vs. Army) was also an area that emerged from this study as important in the context of multidisciplinary teams. Indeed, a number of Air Force participants noted that they felt more stressed about the culture differences between the Air Force and the Army or Navy than they felt about the culture shock of living in another country. Thus, it is clear from this study that cultural differences are an area of concern for leaders of multidisciplinary teams on deployments. When leading a team that consists of Air Force, Army, and Navy personnel, leaders must be aware of the additional stresses that arise from cultural differences related to the different environments and need to be able to promote group cohesion and teamwork despite these differences. Indeed, they must create a culture in which all team members are respected, regardless of their “colour.” Air Force personnel should also be trained to properly manage and mitigate the culture shock within the CF. Once again, this is a leadership responsibility.

Another area in which many participants from formed units (both officers and NCMs) felt that leadership in their unit had failed them was upon reintegrating back into their home unit – for example, through lack of recognition. Often, participants felt like “strangers” to their leadership or unit upon their return after deployment, and many felt ignored by their supervisors upon returning to work. In particular, they felt that their leaders were not interested in hearing about their experiences on deployment and that their leaders were uninterested in their well being. Once again, participants saw this lack of interest as an indication of poor leadership, and of not being looked after by their leaders and the Air Force in general.

Finally, many Air Force participants (i.e., leaders) faced issues related to *authority* upon reintegrating into their home units. In particular, many had problems fitting in again, and felt that they needed to prove themselves or re-establish their authority, after their return.

Conclusions

This study has provided unique insight into what CF Air Force personnel consider the characteristics and responsibilities of effective leadership. In doing so, it has brought to light a number of leadership issues, including those affecting team formation (i.e., choice vs. coercion, identifying the leader, and bureaucracy), leadership issues among augmentees (i.e., lack of belonging, lack of organizational support, lack of support from the home unit, lack of group cohesion, and issues related to promotion and recognition), leadership issues in multidisciplinary teams (i.e., proper training, team integration, culture, colour-centrism), leadership issues within units during deployments, and leadership issues in reintegration. Throughout our interviews, the importance of leadership in team building, deployment, and reintegration was made apparent, as was the importance of leadership in building cohesion among team members with diverse characteristics, functions, and areas of expertise. Indeed, leadership actions have been widely cited as a significant contributor to unit cohesion (Ahronson & Eberman, 2002), and the development of cohesion remains a particular leadership challenge in the context of multidisciplinary teams and/or teams consisting of augmentees. Manning (1991) has suggested that effective communication of information from leaders to group members and a clear understanding of the mission contribute significantly to unit cohesion. Similarly, Siebold (1987) has put forth that concerned, competent, and honest leadership facilitates unit cohesion. In essence, effective leadership works towards creating a common vision for the team: it looks for ways to expand team boundaries and strives to include *all* team members in pursuit of a mission, regardless of their specific attributes.

It was also apparent from this study that trust is important if followers are to accept the goals, beliefs, or vision of the leader (Yukl, 1998). Indeed, trust in leadership is directly related to team performance, for trust allows teams to be willing to accept leaders' activities, goals, and decisions, and to work hard to achieve them (Dirks, 2000). Without trust, team members do not feel that they can rely on their leader and are unlikely to carry out the task specified by the leader or to work towards the objectives set by the leader. It was clear from the focus groups that an important aspect of effective leadership in the context of deployments and reintegration is recognizing the efforts of multidisciplinary teams and augmentees after completion of their deployment. It was our sense from the focus groups that such recognition helps to build trust, loyalty to the CF and a sense of appreciation for their effort and sacrifices, whereas the lack of recognition serves to undermine trust. The participants felt that lack of recognition was a sign that their leaders weren't "taking care of their men." This perception had a negative effect and fostered dissatisfaction among the participants. Numerous recommendations were made by the participants as examples of how recognition could be given, such as: having the home unit commanders brief the augmentees before they leave on deployment; having rear parties organized by the home unit; having adequate transportation organized by leadership upon arrival at the airport after a deployment; greetings from leadership upon arrival at the airport after a deployment; having leadership organize parades and/or welcoming parties in the home unit upon return from a deployment, similar to the Army; adequate follow-up of members on deployment concerning all aspects (e.g., physical health, mental health and family issues); providing sufficient services when required (such as padre, social worker, doctors, etc.). This would require a needs assessment of those returning

from deployment, interest in both their positive and negative experiences on the deployment, interest in problems that occurred while on deployment (this could be also act as a preventative benefit for future deployments), the awarding of medals in a respectable time frame, and the consideration of timely leave.

Although there were only a few instances where a participant commended the quality of leadership in the Air Force, participants in this study offered a few general recommendations for changes, specifically as they pertain to leadership. One recommendation involved leaders' communicating with personnel after they return from deployment – for example, asking personnel about their reintegration needs, and showing interest in the deployment itself. Another recommendation involved leaders getting together with personnel after they return from deployment, finding out what went right and wrong, and learning about what could be improved. In short, effective leaders were seen as those who look to their members for input and feedback. By the same token, it was considered important for leaders to address any issues and provide team members with constructive feedback about a mission, for without this feedback, reintegration and further teamwork may be difficult.

Overall, the results of this study underscore the need for leaders to be flexible and adaptable in order to lead diverse work groups effectively. This might involve education or training in appropriate behaviours for different “cultures” (including service cultures), and increased sensitivity to issues that might arise within more heterogeneous groups. Leaders must be able to recognize different competencies among team members, instil supportive attitudes, establish trust, confidence, cohesion, and commitment to shared goals, and effectively distribute authority and responsibility. They must also be able to manage conflict, and to set an example by modeling appropriate behaviour and promoting the team mission.

Moreover, it is apparent from this study that multidisciplinary teams face extra challenges when it comes to teamwork and cohesion, as often there is no formal training aimed at developing the desired skills and capabilities needed to coordinate different types of expertise. Thus, leaders should be trained to meet the challenges of leading multidisciplinary teams, and team members should be trained to work effectively within such teams. Such predeployment training will also be critical in preparing teams formed with augmentees, as augmentees may face even more stresses compared to formed units (including formed multidisciplinary units). It would be beneficial to train all Air Force members in the areas of effective leadership skills and teamwork in multidisciplinary teams as undoubtedly these members all serve as examples of leaders.

Another issue that arose in this study concerns the termination of the deployment teams. It was clear that appropriate follow-up and feedback after completion of a deployment is an essential component of effective leadership. Organizational support and support from the home unit, both during and after deployment, was also perceived as important by participants. Indeed, many participants expressed disappointment with the support that they received from their leaders, both on deployment and at their home base, and both during and after deployment. In some cases, this disappointment involved the lack of reward or recognition for their deployment efforts (or simply a lack of interest in their deployment) on the part of leaders. In particular, one area in which many of the participants felt that leadership in their unit failed them was upon reintegrating back into their home unit. Again, one aspect of this was through lack of recognition upon returning from deployment, for example, in

performance reviews, tracking of members, or other tangible expressions of recognition, such as meeting personnel at the airport after completion of their deployment. These are all critical issues to take into account when considering the termination of deployment teams, and reintegration issues in general.

In addition to the recommendations suggested above, a number of other recommendations for leaders may be gleaned from this research. One concerns some participants' desire for choice in whether or not to go on deployment. Although logistical and other concerns may curtail certain choices regarding deployments, leaders may nevertheless enter into dialogue with team members so that various options are discussed openly and respectfully. A second recommendation concerns the confusion and frustration that some participants expressed regarding the identification of the leader. Where multiple leaders (or various forms of "leadership teams") exist, leaders should strive to clarify their roles and increase their cohesion with each other. This in turn will decrease confusion among team members and enhance unit functioning. A third recommendation concerns some participants' frustrations with high levels of bureaucracy. Although certain bureaucratic procedures may be necessary on deployment, leaders should review the levels of bureaucracy that exist and strive to eliminate or reduce any unnecessary bureaucracy. Further recommendations from this research include improving overall leadership skills through training of all Air Force members, especially those in positions of leadership, for as the participants interviewed have suggested, possessing a position of leadership does not necessarily imply that one is an effective leader.

This study also raised questions that could not be explored in depth here, but may be followed up in future research. One question concerns potential differences among the seven Bases that participated in this study. Future research could also examine, in greater detail, any differences between officers and NCMs, or between formed units and augmentees, and between different environments (air force vs. army vs. navy). In addition, future research could further explore PER issues related to deployment, as well as examine the effects of the 56-day versus 6-month deployment in relation to team functioning and reintegration issues. Issues of lack of organizational support (e.g., in the form of a rear party), and lack of recognition and support by leadership, proved to be critical aspects of reintegration and are topics worthy of more exploration. Finally, future research could examine the relationship between trust in the leader, or the organization, and retention. Each one of these issues, in addition to the topics discussed more fully in this report, may shed light on leadership issues in the context of Air Force deployment and reintegration.

Table 1. Air Force focus group demographics

Variables		
Age:		40.2
Gender:	Male	75
	Female	20
Education:	Some high school	6
	High school diploma	32
	Some university/college	19
	University/College degree	35
	Graduate degree	3
Rank:	Junior NCMs	37
	Senior NMCs	21
	Junior Officers	25
	Senior Officers	12
Average Years of Service:		18.4
Status:	Regular	78
	Reservist	2
Official Language:	English	58
	French	23
Deployed with OP:	Athena/Apollo	50
Marital Status:	Married (incl common law)	79
	Single (incl divorced, widowed, separated)	16
Number of children living with you:		81

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Annex A

INFORMATION LETTER

Post-deployment reintegration experiences may be of particular concern for Air Force personnel as they often are quickly formed for a tasking or deployment with little lead-time. Moreover, when they return home, they often disperse quite quickly back to their home units. This means that support personnel may have lower levels of organizational and social support to facilitate the reintegration process. Thus, quality of post-deployment reintegration is tied to quality of life, operational effectiveness, and retention – all identified as current sources of concern in the CF.

One of the immediate objectives of this research is to identify the perceptions and appraisals of the ease or difficulty Air Force support personnel have experienced readjusting to the personal, family, organizational and community/cultural aspects of returning home. Another objective is to develop a reliable and valid scale reflecting these experiences, based on the existing Post-Deployment Reintegration Questionnaire.

In the future, we hope to use the Post-Deployment Reintegration Questionnaire to: 1) determine and quantify the relationship between reintegration experiences and various health and well-being indices and 2) provide mental health service providers and commanders with the particular reintegration experiences identified as sources of concern for Air Force support personnel. Third, the findings will also help to suggest ways in which the Canadian Forces can better tailor post-deployment support services to the needs of Air Force support personnel.

Your participation in this study is **completely voluntary**. It will involve participating in a discussion group along with five to nine other colleagues, to discuss negative and positive experiences faced by Air Force support personnel after a deployment. It will also involve discussing and critically evaluating the Post-Deployment Reintegration Questionnaire, in order to modify and tailor it to Air Force support personnel. The discussion group will be approximately 90-120 minutes in duration. A trained researcher will facilitate all discussion.

All information you provide is considered **completely confidential**. Information collected during the discussion groups will be recorded and transcribed, with your consent, and will be kept in a secure location to which only researchers associated with this project have access. Results communicated with mental health service providers and commanders will include only general descriptions, with no identifying information. The only risks in this study are fatigue that may come with participating in a discussion group. There are no other known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If after receiving this letter you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information feel free to contact Dr. Ann-Renée Blais at 416-635-2000 x3082, or by e-mail at Ann-Renée.Blaiss@drdc-rrdc.gc.ca. This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at DRDC-Toronto (L-430).

I thank you in advance for your interest in, and assistance with, this project.
Yours sincerely,

Dr. Ann-Renée Blais
Research Psychologist
Stress & Coping Group
DRDC Toronto

Annex B

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM

Protocol Number: L-430

Research Project Title: Developing a measure of post-deployment reintegration of air force support personnel

Principal Investigator

I, _____ (name) hereby volunteer to participate as a subject in the study, "Developing a measure of post-deployment reintegration of air force support personnel" (Protocol L-430). I understand that I will be participating in a discussion group along with five to nine other colleagues, to discuss negative and positive experiences faced by Air Force support personnel after a deployment. It will also involve discussing and critically evaluating the Post-Deployment Reintegration Questionnaire, in order to modify and tailor it to Air Force support personnel.

I have read the information letter, and have had the opportunity to ask questions of the Investigators. All of my questions concerning this study have been fully answered to my satisfaction. However, I may obtain additional information about the research project and have any questions about this study answered by contacting Dr. Ann-Renée Blais at 416-635-2000 x3082.

I have been told that the principal risk of the research protocol is fatigue. I consider this risk to be acceptable. Also, I acknowledge that my participation in this study, or indeed any research, may involve risks that are currently unforeseen by DRDC Toronto.

I have been advised that the data concerning me will be treated as confidential, and not revealed to anyone other than the DRDC Toronto Investigator(s) or external investigators from the sponsoring agency without my consent except as data unidentified as to source. Moreover, should it be required, I agree to allow the data to be reviewed by an internal or external audit committee with the understanding that any summary information resulting from such a review will not identify me personally.

I understand that I am free to refuse to participate and may withdraw my consent without prejudice or hard feelings at any time. Should I withdraw my consent, my participation as a subject will cease immediately. I also understand that the Investigator(s), or their designate, may terminate my participation at any time, regardless of my wishes.

Volunteer's Name _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

FOR SUBJECT ENQUIRY IF REQUIRED:

Should I have any questions or concern regarding this project **before, during, or after** participation, I understand that I am encouraged to contact Defence R&D Canada - Toronto (DRDC Toronto), P.O. Box 2000, 1133 Sheppard Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M3M 3B9. This contact can be made by surface mail at this address or in person, by phone or e-mail, to any of the DRDC Toronto numbers and addresses listed below:

- Principle Investigator or Principal DRDC Toronto Investigator: Dr. Ann-Renée Blais, 416-635-2000 x3082, Ann-Renée.Blais@drdc-rddc.gc.ca.
- Chair, DRDC Toronto Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC): Dr. Jack Landolt, 416-635-2120, Jack.Landolt@drdc-rddc.gc.ca.

I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form so that I may contact any of the above-mentioned individuals at some time in the future should that be required.

Annex C

Air Force Support Personnel Demographic Survey

1. What is your present Rank?
 Jr. NCM (Pte to MCpl)
 Snr NCM (Sgt to CWO)
 Jnr Off
 Snr Off

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your gender?
 Male
 Female

4. What is your highest level of education?
 Some high school
 High school diploma (Sec V)
 Some university / Some college (CEGEP)
 University degree / College degree
 Graduate degree

5. What is your first official language?
 English
 French

6. What is your marital status?
 Married (incl common-law)
 Single (incl divorced, widowed, or separated)

7. Excluding your partner/spouse, how many dependents live with you? _____

8. What is your status?
 Regular
 Reservist

9. How many years of service in the Canadian Forces have you completed?

10. How many tours have you had:

In total: _____

In the past 5 years: _____

In the past 12 months:

56-day tour: _____

6-month tour: _____

11. Have you deployed with OP Athena or OP Apollo?

Yes

No

If so, which unit have you supported? _____

12. What is your occupation? _____

13. Can you please briefly describe your most recent tour (length, location, etc.):

Annex D

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOCUS GROUP SESSION

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this focus group today. I'm Wendy Sullivan-Kwantes, Research Technician for the Command, Effectiveness and Behaviour Section at DRDC Toronto. I'll be your moderator for this session. With me is Dr. Ann Renee Blais, Defence Scientist at DRDC Toronto. Each of you has been invited here today because you are experts on your own particular deployment and reintegration experience. This research we are conducting is supported by NDHQ and particularly by your ECS. We need you to identify the reintegration experiences of greatest relevance to Air Force personnel and help us develop a reliable and valid questionnaire reflecting these experiences. While this research has been undertaken on the land side, this is a relatively new initiative for the Air Force. Your experiences are very important to us and we use them to recommend changes in the Canadian Forces. In a group discussion like this, it is really important that you express yourself openly. There are no right or wrong answers; we want to know what you think. We are tape recording this session in order to ensure accuracy when writing up a report. However, your responses will not be linked with your name or affiliation in any way. Everything will be anonymous and the tapes will be destroyed when we are finished. Because we are taping, I may remind you occasionally to speak up and to talk one at a time, so I can hear you clearly when I review the session tapes. Each time I ask a question, there is no need to respond if you do not wish to. However, it is important that a wide range of ideas are expressed. If you would like to add an idea or if you have an opinion that contrasts with those that have been aired, that's the time to jump into the conversation.

Annex E

Post-Deployment Reintegration Survey

For the next set of questions, please indicate the extent to which each of the statements below is true for you since returning from your overseas deployment. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. People may have differing views, and we are interested in what your experiences are. **Please indicate the extent to which each of the statements below is true for you since returning from your overseas deployment:**

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
1. I find military bureaucracy more frustrating.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
2. I am more aware of problems in the world.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
3. Putting the events of the tour behind me has been tough.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
4. I still feel like I am “on the edge.”	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
5. My work motivation has increased.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
6. I have felt “out of sorts.”	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
7. There has been tension in my family relationships.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
8. I have a better understanding of other cultures.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
9. I have had difficulty reconciling the devastation I saw overseas with life in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
10. I have had trouble dealing with changes within my family.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
11. I am applying job-related skills I learned during my deployment.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
12. I am glad I went on the tour.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
13. I am more interested in what is happening in other countries.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
14. Dealing with memories of death and injuries has been hard.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
15. I have experienced difficulties readjusting to life in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
16. I feel my current work duties are less meaningful.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
17. My sense of religion or spirituality has deepened.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
18. I feel my career has advanced.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
19. I feel my family is proud of me.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
20. I am mentally tougher than I thought I was.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
21. I have felt like a stranger within my family.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
22. It has been hard to get used to being in Canada again.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
23. I have become more responsive to my family's needs.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
24. I have a greater appreciation of life in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
25. I find the world to be a more horrible place than I thought it was.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
26. It has taken time to feel like myself again.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
27. I have realized how well off we are in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
28. I have been confused about my experiences during the tour.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
29. I feel my community appreciates my efforts overseas.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
30. I am more cynical about humanity.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
31. Being back in Canada has been a bit of a culture shock.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
32. I have a greater appreciation of the value of life.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
33. Focusing on things other than the tour has been difficult.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
34. I have become more involved in my family relationships.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
35. The tour has put a strain on my family life.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
36. Garrison life has been boring.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
37. I have had to get to know my family all over again.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
38. My enthusiasm for my job has grown.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
39. I am better able to deal with stress.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
40. Day-to-day work tasks seem tedious.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
41. I would have liked more leave to feel like myself again.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
42. I feel a stronger sense of teamwork within my unit.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
43. Getting myself back into the family routine has been difficult.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
44. I feel a lower sense of accomplishment at work.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
45. I have realized how important my family is to me.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
46. On a personal level, I have learned some positive things about myself.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
47. I have questioned my faith in humanity.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
48. I feel more self-reliant.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
49. I feel closer to my family.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
50. I find that my family would like me to spend more time with them.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
51. Getting back “into sync” with family life has been hard.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
52. I want to spend time with my buddies from the tour.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
53. I have been less productive at work.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
54. I have a greater willingness to be with my family.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
55. I feel my community has welcomed me.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
56. I find people here in Canada to be concerned about trivial things.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
57. People have made me feel proud to have served my country.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
58. I more fully appreciate the time I spend with my family.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
59. Readjusting to garrison routine has been tough.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
60. I feel my family resented my absence.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
61. I have a greater appreciation of the conveniences taken for granted in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
62. The people I work with respect the fact that I was on tour.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
63. I feel my family has had difficulty understanding me.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
64. Getting back to my “old self” has been hard.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
65. I wish I could spend time away from the people with whom I deployed.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
66. I feel I am a better soldier.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
67. I have changed my priorities in my life.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
68. I have a greater appreciation of each day.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
69. I am proud of having served overseas.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
70. I more fully appreciate the rights and freedoms taken for granted in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
71. I have developed stronger friendships.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
72. I feel my family has welcomed me.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
73. I have considered leaving the military.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
74. I have a more positive perspective on what is important in life.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
75. I enjoy being back in garrison.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
76. I feel the tour has had a negative impact on my personal life.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

If you do not have a spouse/partner please skip the next two questions.

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
77. There has been conflict in my marriage or significant relationship.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
78. My spouse/partner has been reluctant to give up household decisions.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

If you do not have children please skip the next two questions.

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at all True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
79. I find my kid(s) have matured more than I expected.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
80. Relating to my kid(s) has been hard.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
81. I feel my kid(s) resented my absence.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

List of acronyms

ATIS	Aerospace Telecommunication & Information Systems Technician
AVN	Aviation Systems Technician
AVS	Avionics Systems Technician
AIR FORCE	Canadian Air Force
CELE	Communications & Electronics Engineer
CF	Canadian Forces
CFB	Canadian Forces Base
CWO	Chief Warrant Officer
EME	Electrical & Mechanical Engineering
HPMA	Human Performance in Military Aviation
MSEOP	Mobile Support Equipment Operator
NCM	Non-commissioned member
P/H Tech	Plumbing & Heating Technician
RMS	Resource Management Support Clerk
Sgt	Sergeant
TFC tech	Traffic Technician

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14. ABSTRACT

(U) Expanding on previous research on the reintegration experiences of Army Augmentees (Thompson &Gignac, 2001), this study investigated the post-deployment reintegration issues and experiences of a sample of 95 Canadian Air Force personnel posted at seven different Air Force bases across Canada. A total of 14 semi-structured focus groups were held. The purpose of the present report is to detail some of the leadership issues that Air Force personnel identified as important in the context of multidisciplinary teams and teams formed with augmentees. These included leadership issues in team formation (i.e., choice vs. coercion, identifying the leader, and bureaucracy), leadership issues among augmentees (i.e., lack of belonging, lack of organizational support, lack of support from the home unit, lack of group cohesion, and issues related to promotion and recognition), leadership issues in multidisciplinary teams (i.e., proper training, team integration, culture, colour-centrism), leadership issues within units during deployments, leadership issues in reintegration, and effective leadership. Recommendations include the following: determining who actually are Air Force support personnel, as this would have implications for training; improving leadership from home units, as this would have implications for organizational support for Air Force augmentees, reintegration issues, and recognition of Air Force members; and leadership training for leaders of multidisciplinary teams and training for Air Force members, especially Air Force augmentees, who will be working in multidisciplinary teams. Further recommendations from this research include improving overall leadership skills through training of all Air Force members, especially those in positions of leadership, for as the participants interviewed have suggested, holding a position of leadership is not necessarily an indicator of an effective leader.

(U)

15. KEYWORDS, DESCRIPTORS or IDENTIFIERS

(U) Leadership; Air Force; Reintegration; Deployment